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What Shall We Have for Our Breakfast?

ADDRESS
BY
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AT THE
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"What shall we have for our breakfast?" This is rather a curious question to ask after the bountiful dinner given by the Town Crier's Club to their many friends and admirers. But in spite of having had a good dinner we must all confront the fact that in another twelve hours we must eat again.

"What shall we have for our breakfast?" seems a simple question when asked by one individual; but when you consider that an answer must be given 365 days for more than 90,000,000 people or 32,850,000,000 times a year, the question assumes more importance. Battles have been won because troops were well fed and have been lost because they were not; and a well-organized commissary is an important and necessary part of every great army. This great nation of ours cannot achieve all that it should unless we supply the necessary food and the facilities for preparing it so as to answer this simple question about breakfast 32,850,000,000 times a year,

and for the three meals a day, 100,000,000,000 times—a number that cannot be measured by the human mind.

If our people are fed well they will have greater power to use for good the wonderful resources of this country, and particularly of the country west and north of Saint Paul, in which we are all so much interested—a veritable "Land of Fortune." So this simple question—"What shall we have for our breakfast?"—is of national importance and to answer it properly means that many complex agencies must work on a large scale and in harmony.

When one of us sits down in Saint Paul to breakfast and begins with a grape-fruit or a baked apple, we do not analyze the fact that someone in Florida, California, Washington or Oregon has, by patient care for the past ten years, helped a tree to produce the grape fruit or apple, and that a railroad has brought the fruit thousands of miles in good condition ready for breakfast.

After the fruit, some tea or coffee comes, and again someone in far off Asia or South America has worked patiently and gathered the coffee bean and the tea leaf, and the transportation agency in the form of ship and railroad places it within the reach of nearly everyone at a moderate price.

Then one comes to the cereal—wheat or barley or oats or corn—grown out in some of the fertile valleys of Minnesota, North Dakota, Montana, Washington, Idaho, Oregon, Iowa or Nebraska and transported by railroad half way across the continent to some mill, where it is prepared and brought back again by the railroad and laid down in Saint Paul for the use of our citizens.

And so with the sugar—perhaps brought from Cuba or Hawaii, or made from beets grown in the irrigated valleys of the Northwest; so with the bacon or steak, from hogs or cattle which have been hauled hundreds of miles to some great packing house, there prepared for use and transported to market; and the same with eggs and butter, and coal, and glass, and china, and linen, and knives, and all the other things that enter into making the answer of the question possible and apparently quite simple, if one does not consider all the steps that must be taken before the answer can be made.

So if, at breakfast, we stop to think a little we will realize that the answer to the question depends on proper encourage-

ment, development and balance of the great occupations of agriculture, mining, manufacturing and transportation, and without proper balance between these, the feeding of the people is not easy.

There is an increasing effort on the part of thoughtful men to encourage the interest in agriculture and the cumulative effect of that effort is showing a little result and will show more. For years there has been great encouragement given to manufacturing.

At one time there was great encouragement given to transportation, but of late the tendency is to repress it and there is grave danger that the people, in an effort to correct what they think are improprieties in finance and management, have gone too far.

The railroads of the country are great "beasts of burden" to handle the products of the farm, the factory and the mine. Like the patient ox or the strong dray horse, they cannot haul their load unless they are well nourished. There is a story about a shoemaker who had a horse and who conceived the idea that if he mixed shoe pegs with oats the horse would get along all right, and he would not have to buy so many oats. So little by little he increased the proportion of shoe pegs to oats and the horse seemed to thrive. Finally he had changed the proportions of shoe pegs and oats to such an extent that the horse was practically eating nothing but shoe pegs and the shoemaker was very happy over his economy. Suddenly, however, the horse died! There is danger in this country that a diet of shoe pegs is being fed to the railroads in constantly increasing proportions and that these great "beasts of burden" will not be able to serve the country as satisfactorily as they should.

So, again, while we are eating our breakfast, we can think of some of these things and consider whether we are doing all that we can to produce a "Home Product," consisting of good, common sense views of some of the great questions of the day.

Daniel Webster, in 1838, in a speech, said:

> "There are persons who constantly clamor. They complain of oppression, speculation and the pernicious

influence of accumulated wealth. They cry out loudly against all banks and corporations and all means by which small capitals become united in order to produce important and beneficial results. They carry on mad hostility against all established institutions. They would choke the fountain of industry and dry all the streams. In a country of unbounded liberty they clamor against oppression. In a country of perfect equality they would move heaven and earth against privilege and monopoly. In a country where property is more evenly divided than anywhere else, they rend the air shouting agrarian doctrines. In a country where the wages of labor are high beyond parallel they would teach the laborer that he is but an oppressed slave."

We all know that since 1838 the conditions of the poor and rich in the United States have improved in every way, and yet there are people going about the country now preaching the doctrine that things are all wrong and discouraging energetic, active men in their efforts to make progress.

The great majority of people are honest and highminded and it sometimes seems as though we had lost our heads and were condemning everyone because there may be a very small proportion of people who are not honest and highminded. Most people are law-abiding, love their homes and believe in property, but a spirit of suspicion has developed so that all doers are looked upon at times as wrong-doers and to too great an extent government, among some, has come to be looked upon as a guard to stand over everybody and see that he does not do some wrong. As a result the best work cannot be done by our strong and virile people, and at breakfast we might consider whether we have done our full duty when we tacitly sit by and let our statute books become deluged with laws, many of which are of doubtful wisdom.

As a result of this suspicion and extreme lawmaking, there is danger that the transportation part of our breakfast problem will get out of balance with the rest. When we are sick we try to get a doctor who has had experience; when we build a factory we try to get a builder who understands construction; when we lay out our garden we try to get

a gardener who knows; but when we approach the large, complicated question of transportation, we throw to one side the knowledge and views of men who have made that a life study and turn to people who, while they may be sincere, have not had the experience that comes from actual work on the problem under discussion.

Mr. Samuel W. Fairchild, Chairman of the Committee on Internal Trade and Improvements of the New York Chamber of Commerce, recently presented a very luminous report about the railroad situation. He says:

> "It is estimated that it will require in the next five years, to maintain railroad facilities equal to the enormous traffic of the country, the immense sum of $8,500,000,000. Some idea of the magnitude of this sum may be had from the fact that it is eight times the national debt, it is more than two and a half times the amount of money in circulation, it is equal to all the deposits in the national and state banks, and nearly equal to the entire money value of all the farm products of the country in one year. It is over three times the annual gross revenue of the railroads, and it amounts to nearly one-half of the existing railway capital represented by stocks and bonds.
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> The question of obtaining the $8,500,000,000 necessary to make railroad facilities equal to the expanding traffic of the country during the next five years therefore constitutes the most important problem now confronting business men."

He then asks how it is to be obtained and calls attention to the report of the Railway Securities Commission, appointed by President Taft, which says:

> "Neither the rate of return actually received on the par value of American railroad bonds and stocks today, nor the security which can be offered for additional railroad investments in the future, will make it easy to raise the needed amount of capital.
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> The ratio of interest and dividends to outstanding bonds and stocks of American railroads is not quite 4½ per cent in each case. The average ratio of divi-

dends to the capital of national banks is between 10 and 11 per cent.

There is a widespread belief, based on imperfect examination of the evidence, that the amount of capital needed for the future development of our railroad systems is small in proportion to that which has been required in the past; that the profits on such added investments of capital are reasonably well assured; and that we can therefore fix attention predominantly, if not exclusively, on the needs of the shipper without interfering with the necessary supply of new money from the investors."

The Commission goes on further and says:

"A reasonable return is one which, under honest accounting and responsible management, will attract the amount of investors' money needed for the development of our railroad facilities. If rates are going to be reduced whenever dividends exceed current rates of interest, investors will seek other fields where the hazard is less or the opportunity greater."

To quote again from the Railway Securities Commission:

"The necessary development of railroad facilities is now endangered by the reluctance of investors to purchase new issues of railroad securities in the amounts required. This reluctance is likely to continue until the American public understands the essential community of interest between shipper and investor, and the folly of attempting to protect the one by taking away the rewards of good management from the other."

Mr. Fairchild also points out; the time has arrived when there should be some support of the railroads and it would certainly seem as though he were correct.

To answer the simple question—"What shall we have for our breakfast"—on the larger scale that is necessary, requires great instruments of trade and the following editorial from the Cedar Rapids Daily Republican of April 7th is interesting:

"We are indeed a funny people. It used to be that we were anxious to have business grow big. But nowadays we pass ten laws to regulate business where we pass one to encourage business. All our law-makers seem to be anxious to distinguish themselves as hamperers and crushers of business, instead of helpers and promoters of business. They are engaged in stupendous tasks to destroy rather than to construct. And the dear common people in whose interests these things are alleged to be done are really the sufferers and laborers suffer most of all.

It would seem that the time has come for the encouragement rather than the discouragement of business. We want to go ahead, not to stand still. We can go ahead and we will go ahead if the politicians will let us alone for a while."

This is not from a paper in a great city but from one in a prairie state, and this editor is voicing a sentiment which has undoubtedly begun to take root in the minds of many who are engaged in the work of preparing the national breakfast.

And the following extract from an editorial in the Chicago Inter Ocean, April 8th, is interesting:

"Under the pressure of the political forces now operating, all railroads are headed for the bankruptcy court. There will be a difference in the time when they arrive there, but they will all arrive—that is, unless the present forces cease or change. Bad, inefficient, arrogant or corrupt management will quicken their pace along the road. Good, efficient, considerate and honest management will retard the rate of progress downward. But the end will be the same for all unless there is a change in the power and direction of the forces now controlling railroad destinies."

"We do not say whether these forces are right or wrong. We do not here discuss the question of their injury or benefit to the general public welfare. We merely record their power and their direction."

So each one of us at breakfast can meditate and give thanks that he lives in as fine a city as St. Paul and in as wonderful a country as the great northwest, and congratulate himself upon the many good "Home Products" of a material kind that are here. But each of us can also try to produce a "Home Product" of a high grade of citizenship and a public opinion that will have its effect now and with increasing force in the future to make this city, this state, and the Northwest, a place where good men and good women will make their homes, and help to solve the ever present question, "What shall we have for breakfast?" along the right lines.

This great northwest of ours is young in the life of the nation and with great power for the future; is like a strong, brave and energetic young man just realizing his physical and mental powers and entering upon a career of hard work and noble achievement.

To permit this great northwest to develop as it should, the people of St. Paul, the capital city of Minnesota, have a great opportunity for helping to create a public opinion that will direct the forces that are now working for or against sensible progress in such a way that the best will be accomplished for all. This city has a wonderful location in that it is near a region that will support a constantly increasing number of people who live near to the soil and near to nature—freeholders, who, in the long run, will save our institutions from complications that arise in congested cities where living conditions become harder each year. By a proper adjustment of the great agricultural and transportation possibilities of this northwestern empire, we will postpone the day in this country which Oliver Goldsmith described as follows:

> "Ill fares the land to hastening ills a prey,
> Where wealth accumulates and men decay,
> Princes and lords may flourish or may fade,
> A breath can make them as a breath has made;
> But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
> When once destroyed can never be supplied."